

Unauthorized access of Medi-Cal computer files

Background: A portable computer containing personal information was stolen from the locked trunk of a car belonging to a DHS contractor. The stolen computer may have stored personal information, such as name, social security number or other information about some Medi-Cal beneficiaries.

QUESTION	ANSWER
I received a letter stating that there was unauthorized access to my personal information, what does this mean?	Your name and/or social security number, birth date, medical service billing information (such as date of service, service code, service description, diagnosis code etc.). Please keep in mind that these are codes for the services in which your doctor has billed for, the actual type of service was not described in the file.
I heard that there were Medi-Cal beneficiaries whose personal information may have been compromised. How do I find out if this affects me?	<p>The affected Medi-Cal beneficiaries were sent a letter and provided instructions on how to protect themselves from potential identity theft, what corrective steps have been taken by Medi-Cal, as well as a toll free support telephone number to call for any questions they may have.</p> <p>You may call the toll free number to verify whether your information may have been compromised.</p>
My friend/family received a letter, but I did not receive a letter. Was I suppose to?	<p>The affected Medi-Cal beneficiaries were sent a letter and provided instructions on how to protect themselves from potential identity theft, what corrective steps have been taken by Medi-Cal, as well as a toll free support telephone number to call for any questions they may have.</p> <p>You may call the toll free number to verify whether your information may have been compromised.</p>
How did someone gain access to my personal information in the first place?	A portable computer, that may have contained claims data and personal information for Medi-Cal beneficiaries, was stolen from the car of a CA Dept. of Health Services (DHS) contractor. That data was being used for claims processing and payment review and was obtained under appropriate authorization from DHS. We are not certain that your personal information was accessed.
Doesn't the California Department of Health Services need permission to provide my personal information to someone else?	No. DHS is authorized by law to share this information with staff employed by the DHS contractor for processing payments to health care providers and operational purposes in order to administer the Medi-Cal program, pursuant to 45 CFR 160.203(b), the Welfare and Institutions Code section 14100.2, and the DHS' Policies and Procedures.

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What important information of mine was in the computer that someone may have accessed?	Your name and/or social security number, birth date, medical service billing information (such as date of service, service code, service description, diagnosis code etc.). Please keep in mind that these are codes for the services in which your doctor has billed for, the actual type of service was not described in the file.
Does this mean that I'm a victim of identity theft?	<p>No. The fact that someone may have had access to the database doesn't mean you are a victim of identity theft or that they intend to use the information to commit fraud. To this date, we have not received any information indicating that identity theft or any misuse of your data has occurred. However, we wanted to let you know about the incident so that you can take appropriate steps to protect yourself, if you are concerned. The best way to find out if anyone is using your information fraudulently is to request and review your credit reports. You may obtain a copy of your credit report from the three major credit bureaus:</p> <p>Trans Union - 1-800-680-7289</p> <p>Experian - 1-888-397-3742</p> <p>Equifax - 1-800-525-6285</p>
How will I know if any of my information was used by someone?	If you notice suspicious charges on your credit card statements that you did not make or if you notice new accounts on your credit report that you did not open, these may be indications that someone else may be using your information, without your permission. You should immediately alert one of the credit bureaus, place a fraud alert on your credit files and request a copy of your credit report. After receiving your credit report (within 6-8 days), you should contact the fraud division number listed on the report.
Will I be responsible for any credit charges I don't recognize on my credit report?	The fraud division will provide a report with the names and telephone numbers of the creditors. You will need to contact the creditors immediately and advise them of the fraud. The fraud division will work with you and the creditors to remove all of the fraudulent activity from your file.
Will this disclosure affect my services as a Medi-Cal beneficiary or my ability to receive care?	No. This incident will not affect beneficiary access or participation in the Medi-Cal program.
How will I know if someone has used my SSN/Medi-Cal ID # for medical services?	All SSNs/Medi-Cal ID #'s that were contained on the laptop will be closely monitored for suspicious activity.
How can I obtain a report that will show whether someone has used my information to	You may request a copy of your Medi-Cal billing records by calling the toll free telephone

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bill Medi-Cal?	number 1-866-422-2363. The information contained in this report will not be your actual medical reports, it will show the services that were billed by the doctor or medical provider.
Is there a cost for this report?	No, this report will be provided to you free of charge.
Will my social worker help me?	<p>No, your social worker may not be aware of this situation. Please call one of the following toll-free numbers for the credit reporting agencies to place a fraud alert and receive a free copy of your credit report:</p> <p>Trans Union - 1-800-680-7289</p> <p>Experian - 1-888-397-3742</p> <p>Equifax - 1-800-525-6285</p>
What happens if I don't place a fraud alert with the credit agencies?	Placing a fraud alert with the credit agencies is your choice. You don't have to do it; however, if you feel that you want to take an extra precautionary step in case someone does try to use your information fraudulently, a fraud alert will certainly help protect you.
I called the 800# to the credit bureaus, and no one seems to speak Spanish. How can you help me?	Currently, the credit bureaus' telephone systems are not equipped to provide telephone services to non-English speaking callers. You should be aware, however, that the credit bureaus' automated responses are in English. The Federal Trade Commission does provide Spanish translation as part of its automated services, which includes information on ID theft. The toll-free number to contact the Federal Trade Commission is 1-877-438-4338, then press 9.
How long does it take to receive my credit report?	It usually takes anywhere from six to eight days to receive your credit report.
Do I have to pay for the credit report?	<p>There is no charge to obtain a copy of your credit report if you call one of the following credit bureaus:</p> <p>Trans Union - 1-800-680-7289</p> <p>Equifax - 1-800-525-6285</p> <p>Experian - 1-888-397-3742</p> <p>Be sure to remain on the line and follow the recorded message. You may also request your free report on-line through Experian at www.freecreditreportservice.com</p>
Do I have to call all three credit bureaus?	No. With just one call you can order your credit report and place a fraud alert on your file with all three major credit bureaus.
Why can't I talk to someone at the credit	You must first order your credit reports through

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bureaus?	the credit bureaus' automated phone systems. When you receive your report, it will have a phone number you can call to speak with someone in the bureau's fraud unit. If you see anything on your report that looks unusual or that you don't understand, call the number on the report.
I called the credit bureau fraud line after receiving my credit report and they asked for my Social Security number. Is it okay to give it?	The credit bureaus must identify you to avoid giving your credit report to the wrong person. You will be asked for your Social Security number, your address and other information. It is okay to give this information to the credit bureau that you call.
Does a fraud alert stop me from using my credit cards?	No. A fraud alert should not stop you from using your existing credit cards or other accounts. It slows down your ability to get new credit. It also helps protect you against an identity thief trying to open credit accounts in your name. Credit issuers get a special message alerting them to the possibility of fraud. Creditors know that they should re-verify the identity of the person applying for credit.
How long does a fraud alert last?	A standard fraud alert lasts between 90 days and one year. Trans Union lasts 12 months, Equifax lasts six months and Experian lasts three months. You can remove it at any time by calling the credit bureaus at the phone number given on your credit report. If you want to reinstate the alert, you can do so.
What if I have a fraud alert on, but I want to apply for credit?	You should still be able to get credit. While a fraud alert may slow down the application process, you can usually prove your identity to a prospective creditor by providing identifying information.
I am really confused about what to do about my credit report and don't know whether I should place the alert with the credit bureaus.	You may contact the toll free telephone number 1-866-422-2363 and they will refer you to a credit counseling service free of charge to assist you further.
Should I contact the Social Security Administration and change my Social Security number?	The Social Security Administration very rarely changes a person's SSN. And the mere possibility of fraudulent use of your SSN would probably not be viewed as a justification. There are drawbacks to doing so, since it may result in losing your credit history, your academic records and professional degrees. The absence of any credit history under the new SSN would make it difficult to get credit, continue college, rent an apartment, open a bank account, get health insurance, etc. In most cases, getting a new SSN would not be a good idea.

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Should I close my bank account?	Bank account information was not contained in the computer system, therefore, this incident is not a reason to close your bank account. (As a general privacy protection measure, you should limit the use of your SSN where it's not required. For example, if your bank account number is your SSN, you should ask the bank to give you a different account number. Do NOT use last four digits of your SSN (or your mother's maiden name or your birth date) as your PIN for ATM and other banking or credit transactions.
Should I close my credit card or other accounts?	No account information was contained in the computer system; however, you may wish to place a fraud alert on your accounts. As a general privacy protection measure, you should always look over your credit card bills carefully to see if there are any purchases you didn't make.
What should I look for on my credit report?	<p>Look for any accounts that you don't recognize, especially accounts opened recently. Look at the inquiries or requests section for names of creditors from whom you haven't requested credit. Note that some kinds of inquiries, labeled something like "promotional inquiries," are for unsolicited offers of credit, mostly from companies with whom you do business.</p> <p>Don't be concerned about those inquiries as a sign of fraud. (You are automatically removed from lists to receive unsolicited pre-approved credit offers when you put a fraud alert on your account. You can also stop those offers by calling 1-888-5OPTOUT.)</p> <p>Look in the personal information section for addresses where you've never lived. Any of these things might be indications of fraud. Also be on the alert for other possible signs of identity theft, such as calls from creditors or debt collectors about bills that you don't recognize, or unusual charges on your credit card bills.</p>
What happens if I find out that I have been a victim of identify theft?	You should immediately notify your local law enforcement agency and contact one of the three credit bureaus.
How often should I order new credit reports and how long should I go on ordering them?	It might be a good idea to order copies of your credit reports every three months for a while. How long you continue to order them is up to you. Identity thieves usually, but not always, act soon after stealing personal information. We recommend checking your credit reports at least twice a year as a general privacy protection measure.
How can I file a Privacy Complaint?	You may file a complaint by contacting the

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	<p>HIPAA Privacy Officer at (916) 255-5259 or you may file your complaint in writing:</p> <p>Privacy Officer</p> <p>CA Department of Health Services</p> <p>P.O. BOX 942732</p> <p>Sacramento, CA 94234-7320</p>
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